

Planning Commission / City Commission
Electronic Meeting
February 4, 2021
6:00 p.m.
Joint Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Denison called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

NONE

Roll Call

Members Present: Sean Denison, Cameron Downey, Larry Money, Patrick Swem, Mark Weedon, Jason Leitz, Kevin Barker, Ralph McDonald, Donna Monell
(all in Buchanan, MI unless otherwise indicated)

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Heather Grace, City Manager; Barbara Pitcher, City Clerk; Richard Murphy, Community Development Director; JT Adkerson, Director of Public Works; Tim Ganus, Police Chief

Others Present: Ann Tuite, Penny Slocum, Don Ryman, Suzanne Deneau, Fran Terry, Alan Robandt, Dan Vigansky, Debra Haight, Thomas Rhyndress, Mack Green, Kelly Dickerson, Tom Jolly, Joe Paolucci, Karen Falkenstein, Kim Moyer, Krista Perin and others

Agenda

Money moved, seconded by Weedon to approve the agenda as presented. Roll call vote carried unanimously.

Public Comment – Agenda Items Only (3-minute limit)

- **Dan Vigansky** – Said he didn't know if anything would get done tonight – need to prioritize. Appalled at the length of the agenda. Spoke regarding Ross Sanders and DPW buildings and that the flowers used to be purchased by the DDA and taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for them.
- **Alan Robandt** – Money will need to be spent no matter where.
- **Penny Slocum** – Price of flowers has been consistent for years. Someone should work on gathering donations to cover costs.

- **Fran Terry** – Reiterated Slocum’s comment suggesting donations and volunteers be used for flowers.

Scheduled Matters from the Floor (if any)

McCoy Creek Trail Grant Presentation- Suzannah Deneau from Wightman presented options related to the latest phase expansion for the McCoy Creek Trail. Mack Green, having been involved in his previous role, responded to questions on previous options the Commission approved.

Thomas Rhyndress – *Internet Connectivity Options Relating to Downtown Planning* – Rhyndress was called to an emergency and was unable to remain in the meeting for this agenda item.

Reports by: Departments, Committees, Boards

Community Development- Community Development Director Rich Murphy provided a report on the following ongoing projects:

- *Master Plan Update i. Proposed Timeline for Remainder of Master Plan Update Work*– Advisor Marcy Hamilton has prepared a proposed timeline for completing the City’s Master Plan update.
- *Survey Results*– The downtown-oriented Master Plan survey results are in.
- *Urban Design Studio i. Summary of First Steering Committee Meeting*– Mr. Murphy provided a brief overview of the results of the February 3, 2021 Steering Committee meeting.
- *Plan RE Community Development Stakeholder Groups & Team Leaders*– A proposed list of Community Development Stakeholder Groups and corresponding Stakeholder Group Team Leaders has been prepared with hopes that such groups could report ideas for community revitalization to Community Development Director Rich Murphy. Such reports would be helpful to have when the Andrews University Urban Design Studio is completing their work. Additionally, the reports would also help provide Mr. Murphy with information vital to his work in community development in general. The proposed Stakeholder Groups would not be official committees of the City, but instead, would serve as informal groups who could meet on their own schedules, with no formal minutes requirements—just a request that they consider sending notes to Mr. Murphy so that the City has them to rely upon when deciding how to proceed regarding future strategic projects. None of the proposed Team Leaders have yet been formally asked to serve, in case any changes were requested first.

Unfinished Business

NONE

New Business

Flowers (former DDA order) – Chuck Falkenstein, owner of the Buchanan Floral Company, is requesting that the City consider whether they want to place the same order for flowers that the DDA used to make, which is for 34 18” moss baskets, and 524 4 ½ “ pots of annuals for dish planters. The total cost for the project would be \$3,981 which is the same cost that it was when it was approved last year. Mr. Falkenstein needs an answer ASAP so that he can get the seedlings started in time.

Denison suggested volunteers and donations be solicited.

Dennison moved, seconded by Money to approve purchase of volunteers. Roll call vote carried unanimously with Weedon absent from the vote due to technical difficulties.

Communications

408 River Street – An opportunity regarding a potential lease or sale of property that could be used to store DPW equipment was presented at the last City Commission meeting involving property at 408 River Street, owned by G2 Developments of Michigan, LLC (7 Engines). The property is located directly adjacent to the City’s wastewater treatment plant. Additional information is anticipated to be presented in the form of a formal proposal, but has not yet been received. It will be share with Commissioners as soon as it is received. A Zoom meeting with Rob Spengler of G2 Developments is scheduled for today at 3:00 p.m.

606 Clark Street (current DPW location) – Director of Public Services JT Adkerson has proposed a new option for keeping that DPW facility at its current location. Instead of tearing down the existing garage and rebuilding at the exact same site, JT is now proposing that the City consider building a new garage up on the hill by tearing down a portion of the existing steel building that is in bad shape and then adding on to that building something large enough to house our operations. JT is hopeful that this proposal will be cheaper, out of the flood plain, and allow the DPW to keep their operations in the current building until the new building is finished. This option was previously considered too difficult/costly due to the hardships associated with running needed utilities to that location; however, JT has re-assessed the situation and now believes that with the correct boring techniques, that this could be a feasible option.

111 Railroad Street (Old Feed Mill)- Earlier this week, Jason Paturalski phoned Manager Grace to share that his family was no longer interested in pursuing a business opportunity at the Old Feed Mill. However, Mr. Paturalski has no called Grace again to share that now they are still interested in the property, as Nutrina has recently expressed a renewed interest in the potential project. Mr. Paturalski was given permission by Grace to show the property to some Nutrina reps, and now Grace is awaiting an update from Paturalski. As an alternative/back-up plan, JT Adkerson has confirmed that the original party offering to demo the building for around \$40,000 is willing to still do so, likely for around the same price, if that was something that the City wanted still consider.

Edgewater Bank / Police Department- The City Attorney has recently shared an attorney-client privileged legal communication about this location, which is available for review by City Commissioners. Chief Ganus was also wanting to share his thoughts that he feels that the current

location serves the City PD well, especially due to the emergency command center located in the basement, in addition to the bank vaults being used as evidence rooms—which is extremely persuasive for juries during questions from defense attorneys attempting to challenge chain of custody of evidence, which often try to paint evidence rooms as insecure—which is very difficult for them to argue at the present time. Manager Grace and Chief Ganus both thought it was worth noting that parking would probably be a major concern if the City were to consider moving the Police Department over to the current City Hall location.

Ross Sanders- Recent community input has suggested considering the Ross Sanders location as a potential spot to re-locate City Hall, with Redbud City Center as an option for hosting larger board/committee/commission meetings. While some community input has even suggested moving the PD back to Ross Sanders as well, Chief Ganus wanted to convey that it would be very expensive and extremely difficult to remodel that building in such a way that would allow for the security necessary to house a PD, as not only do areas have to be made safe to house suspects for interrogation, but several highly secure areas for storing evidence and confidential information/tech equipment is also necessary, and the State and Feds have very high standards for how we have to secure any computer and servers that have access to the LEIN system, etc.

302 N. Redbud (current City Hall)- Repairs at the current City Hall location are necessary if the City intends to keep City Hall operations at its current location, as several areas of needed improvement have been noted, including:

- Problems with the electrical wiring that will require an electrician to assess and repair (unknown cost)
- Broken glass in employee break room (unknown cost)
- Updating of internet wiring throughout building (unknown cost)
- •Replacement of failing boiler control unit (estimated cost ~ \$50,000)

All of these repairs are definitely doable. However, City Administration wants to be sure that the City intends to keep City Hall operations at its current location before the money to pay for such repairs is invested in the current building.

Municipal Complex Ideas – Village of Cassopolis- It was recently brought to the attention of City Administration that a municipal complex project in the Village of Cassopolis might be worth reviewing as a conversation-starter for something the City of Buchanan could consider. I have discussed the issue with the team from Wightman that worked on the project, and they are going to find out whether we could qualify for any low-interest loans from USDA and/ or potentially request funding assistance from the Pokagon. The hard costs of the Cassopolis project were approximately \$3 million dollars, but that only includes construction itself, not other soft costs, like

insurance, site prep, etc. Any additional information received by tonight will be provided during the meeting.

Public Comment – (3-minute limit)

- **Dan Vigansky** – Thanked Mayor Denison. Clarified that the meeting notice stated this was a work session, not a meeting.
- **Alan Robandt** – Asked about Steering Committees, are they public or secret. (The list was shared.)
- **Penny Slocum** – Asked if the Police Department could do something about people snowmobiling through the cemetery. (Chief Ganus indicated it has been taken care of.)

Closing Comments

City Manager, Planning Commissioners and City Commissioner closing comments unable to be captured due to technical difficulties.

Adjournment

There being no further business Denison adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Barbara A Pitcher, City Clerk

Sean Denison, Mayor